

Chapter 23

Weekly Activity Reports

The Area Office provides weekly information on "Key Mission Area News" to the ARS-Information Staff. This information is sent to the Secretary of Agriculture, who in turn, summarizes them into a USDA report to the White House.

Each Management Unit is to provide the Area Office with a periodic report on newsworthy items such as scientific findings and releases. Provide a complete description of the event, appearance, issue, Congressional testimony, and agency announcements that may make news in the next two weeks. In reporting on meetings attended, use judgement in reporting only those which are significant in terms of policy, important program developments, and potential problems – especially those which may generate public or media attention. Newsworthy items include scientific findings and releases.

Cross References: Chapter 25 - Media Contacts

Point of Contact:

For info on format...

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United States Department of Agriculture
Research, Education and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

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SUBJECT: Northern Plains Area (NPA) Weekly Activity Report

TO: Center/Laboratory Directors
Research Leaders
Location Administrative Officers

FROM: Melinda McClanahan, Associate Area Director /s/

One of my responsibilities as Associate Area Director is the coordination of the NPA Weekly Activity Report that we send to Headquarters.

I have looked over several of these reports from recent months, and it seems to me that this is a good vehicle to keep the NPA scientific staff informed of notable research activities going on within your different units. I will e-mail you copies of the articles I select to send to Headquarters. This should help to update you and your staff on what your colleagues across the NPA are identifying as leading research activities and accomplishments.

Please e-mail the information to Louise Dalton (dalton@npa.ars.usda.gov) on Tuesdays by COB. For format, please refer to Chapter 23 in the NPA Quick Reference Guide.

(Revised 10/2000)

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E-Mail received from Sean Adams, Chief Current Information Branch, 2/15/00, and forwarded to All RL's and NPAO's.

Subject: Style Guideline for Weekly Activity Report

A few weeks back, the people at USDA/REE who review the weekly report gave us some updated style guidelines for the report. They don't have the guidelines available electronically, so I've asked for something concise in writing that I can fax to you. I will fax this information as soon as I receive it. Meanwhile, I'm e-mailing some general points that they mentioned.

- 1) Start each item with a brief title boldfaced, i.e., **Research Fights Cattle Virus, or Scientist Speaks to Poultry Group.**
- 2) Then please include a date (just month and date if it's the current year), i.e., January 25. Spell out the month. Including the date is critical; most of the calls I get from the ARS Administrator's office involve missing dates. I realize that often you don't receive dates from field offices, so you might want to reiterate to them the importance of including dates.
- 3) Mention scientist's name, title, lab name and location (you should abbreviate the state, i.e., CA, MD, IL, etc. You should repeat this information in full for each item.
- 4) On media contacts, please be sure to include the date, media name, scientist and what the call was about. See Chapter 25 for NPA procedures.

Thanks for your continuing cooperation in compiling and sending in these items.

Weekly Activity Report	The Area Office provides weekly information to the ARS-Information Staff for forwarding to the REE Under Secretary. The REE report is then forwarded to USDA for inclusion in a report that is prepared and submitted to the White House.	Due Every Tuesday
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KEY MISSION AREA NEWS

Include Newsworthy items such as scientific findings and releases. Provide a complete description of the event, appearance, issue, Congressional testimony, and agency announcements that may make news in the next two weeks. In reporting on meetings attended, use judgement in reporting only those which are significant in terms of policy, important program developments, and potential problems – especially those which may generate public or media attention. The following are some samples:

Gene Silencing in Transgenic Potatoes: On July 20, the ARS North Atlantic Area reported that scientist Bill Brodie, Plant Protection Research Unit, Ithaca, NY, discovered that the potato cultivar Atlantic that had been transformed with the Bt gene for insect resistance lost its resistance to the golden nematode. The nematode infected and reproduced freely on Atlantic New Leaf clone 6, a potato variety produced by transforming the golden nematode resistant cultivar Atlantic with the Bt gene. Two other Atlantic clones transformed with the Bt gene maintained their resistance to the golden nematode. DNA analysis of these clones showed that all of them contained the marker for the gene that confers resistance to the golden nematode, suggesting that the transformation event in Atlantic New Leaf clone 6 prevented the expression of this gene. These findings will be presented during the meeting of the Potato Association of America in Colorado Springs, July 24-26, 2000.

Testing on Mechanical Cherry Harvester Continues: On July 20, the ARS North Atlantic Area reported that agricultural engineer Donald Peterson and engineering technician Scott Wolford from the Appalachian Fruit Research Station, Kearneysville, WV, recently completed three weeks of testing a new concept for mechanical harvesting of stemless sweet cherries for the fresh market in the state of Washington. It was an unusual year weatherwise, which limited the reduction effect of the growth regulator ethep on fruit removal as in past years. However, results were very encouraging, with fruit damage only 3-7% more with the machine harvesting than with hand harvesting. All machine components operated as hoped for and much was learned about machine/tree compatibility and requirements for mechanical harvesting success. Representatives of the Washington State Tree Fruit Research Commission were very pleased with the efforts and results.

Las Cruces Lab Contract: On July 17, ARS Facilities Division awarded a construction contract to Wooten Construction Company of Las Cruces, NM, to build a new 29,000 sq. ft. office and laboratory facility for the ARS research unit at the Jornada Experimental Range, Las Cruces, NM. This \$6.7 million dollar building will be constructed on the campus of New Mexico State University. An official groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for August 18, 2000.

ARS, DOE Study Carbon Storage: On July 19, the ARS Mid South Area reported that the National Soil Dynamics laboratory (NSDL) in Auburn, AL, is cooperating with the Department of Energy's new Center to investigate carbon sequestration in terrestrial ecosystems. The program will focus on ways to enhance soil carbon storage in agricultural and forest systems to reduce the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The NSDL study site is exploring the potential for soil carbon storage in conservation tillage systems compared to conventional cropping systems under normal and elevated levels of carbon dioxide.